

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

March 22, 2026



Dear St. Elizabeth Parishioners ,

Archbishop's Annual Appeal (AAA) 2026: We need to raise \$34,588. as our commitment toward the Archdiocese this year. Please see in the bulletin the names of all donors so far to AAA 2026. We have collected so far \$18,097.00. The balance we need to raise is \$16,491.00. This Sunday we are starting the last week of the month-long campaign. If everyone participates, this can be a success quickly. We are making progress, but we need more people to come onboard and help. While I thank all those who have donated, I request everyone else to give whatever you can. Last weekend at all Masses, David Gemignani spoke about AAA and his personal connections with our parish and the Archdiocese. If possible, can you give 1.5%, which is \$500? Please consider this donation prayerfully as part of our Lenten giving.

Next Sunday, March 29, is Palm Sunday: Please see in the bulletin the schedule for the Holy Week as well as in my Easter letter to be posted to all parishioners. On Palm Sunday before the 10.30 a.m. Mass, we will start the procession from the Grotto area. Please do participate in the Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday ceremonies with great devotion and a sense of closeness to Jesus.

Musings on Lent: We are starting the fifth week of Lent. There are five Sundays this Lent followed by Palm Sunday (March 29) followed, of course, by Easter Sunday (April 5). It would be fruitful for us and our families to continue reflecting on the meaning of Lent, even as we come close to the end of this season. Jesus stayed in the desert for forty days, prayed to his Father, felt guided by the Spirit, did penance, overcame temptations, reflected on his life, drew up plans for his public ministry, and opened his mind and heart to the possibility of opposition and suffering leading up to his crucifixion. Jesus felt the need for this desert experience. We look upon Jesus and realize that we too need the "desert" experience---to think about what is going on in our lives and reorient ourselves towards God, family, and faith.

Lent is that desert experience, a time for repentance and awareness of our mortality. Our fasting, abstinence, and devotions continuously remind us of the meaning of this season and the need for some practical decisions we need to make. For example, is my life rooted in love or selfishness? Is my life marked by giving or hoarding? Is my life guided by the Spirit of God or by my own desires and passions? Do I feel connected to Jesus or not? What are the values of Jesus that I practice or don't follow? Am I humble like Jesus or do I put myself at the center of the universe in adoration of myself? Do I understand that love means respect, patience, kindness, forgiveness, and sharing? How am I connected with the faith community I call the Church? What do I do to others in terms of service and compassion? Do I keep in mind those who are fragile, vulnerable and on the margins of society and culture? We could examine ourselves along these lines.

What to Give Up for Lent: As we are engaged in the Lenten practices of fasting, praying, and almsgiving this Lent, we could think about these things that we need to give up as part of our Lenten observances: Give up complaining ... focus on gratitude. Give up pessimism ... become an optimist. Give up harsh judgments ... think kindly thoughts. Give up worry ... trust Divine Providence. Give up discouragement ... be full of hope. Give up bitterness ... turn to forgiveness. Give up hatred ... return good for evil. Give up negativism ... be positive. Give up anger ... be more patient. Give up gloom ... enjoy the beauty that is all around. Give up jealousy ... pray for trust. Give up sin ... turn to virtue. Give up giving up ... hang in there.

Word of God---Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year A: In today's Gospel, we witness the profound humanity and divinity of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. Standing before the cave, Jesus weeps – not out of despair, but out of deep love for his friend. Yet, he speaks a command that shatters the power of the grave: "Lazarus, come out!" As we approach the end of Lent, this miracle serves as a prelude to the Resurrection. Jesus reveals himself as "the resurrection and the life," proving that no situation is too dead for God's grace to reach. We all carry "graves" – habits, sorrows, or spiritual dryness – that feel sealed by heavy stones. Today, Christ calls us to step into the light. May we have the courage to unbind ourselves and walk in the freedom of his new life.

Lenten Prayer: "O Lord, make this Lenten season different from the other ones. Let me find you again. Amen." --- Henry Nouwen.

A Wisdom Story: The Boy and the Nails: A boy with a temper was told to hammer a nail into a fence every time he lost control. Later, he removed them one by one. The fence remained scarred. "Words and anger leave marks," his father said, "even after you take them back."

Catholic Jokes: 1. A tailor confessed that he had stolen a roll of cloth from a van. "I hope you won't make a habit of it, said the priest. "Certainly not," said the tailor. "I was going to make two suits from it." 2. While Father Giles was preaching his sermon, a woman in the congregation began to cough loudly and often. The priest said to a man who was sitting up front, "Give that lady a glass of water!" Then Father Giles returned to his sermon, but lost his train of thought. "Now, what was I saying?" he murmured. The man replied, "Give that lady a glass of water."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota